

2 Corinthians 11:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.

Analysis

Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. The rapid-fire threefold claim establishes Paul's Jewish credentials matching the 'super-apostles.' *Hebraioi* (Ἑβραῖοι, 'Hebrews')—pure Jewish heritage, likely Aramaic-speaking. *Israēlitai* (Ἰσραὴλῖται, 'Israelites')—members of the covenant people. *Sperma Abraam* (σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ, 'seed of Abraham')—heirs of the promise.

The triple repetition *kagō* (κἀγώ, 'I also') matches their claim for claim. Paul could boast in fleshly credentials if needed (Phil 3:4-6)—circumcised the eighth day, tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of Hebrews, Pharisee. The false apostles apparently used Jewish pedigree to claim superiority; Paul neutralizes this by asserting equal heritage before moving beyond it.

Yet Paul elsewhere counts these credentials as *skybala* (σκύβαλα, 'rubbish,' Phil 3:8) compared to knowing Christ. Here he temporarily enters the fleshly boasting arena only to transcend it. If Jewish heritage matters to you, I have it. But watch what I boast of next—not racial privilege but suffering service.

Historical Context

The Judaizing controversy plagued early Christianity (cf. Galatians, Acts 15). Jewish Christians sometimes claimed superiority over Gentile believers. The false apostles in Corinth likely emphasized their Jewish credentials as evidence of

apostolic authority superior to Paul's. Paul must assert equality in heritage before showing the irrelevance of such boasting.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How do people today boast of religious heritage, denominational pedigree, or theological lineage in ways that miss the point of gospel ministry?
2. Why might Paul temporarily engage in 'fleshly' boasting about credentials he elsewhere calls worthless—what strategic purpose does this serve?
3. In what ways do we cling to spiritual credentials (family background, church tradition, theological education) that are valuable but not ultimate?

Interlinear Text

Ἐβραῖοί	εἰσιν	κάγω	Ισραηλῖται	εἰσιν	κάγω	σπέρμα
Hebrews	Are they	so am I	Israelites	Are they	so am I	the seed
G1445	G1526	G2504	G2475	G1526	G2504	G4690

Ἄβραάμ	εἰσιν	κάγω
of Abraham	Are they	so am I
G11	G1526	G2504

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 3:5 (References Israel): Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

Romans 11:1 (References Abraham): I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

Romans 9:4 (References Israel): Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

Acts 22:3 (Parallel theme): I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

Exodus 7:16 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear.

Exodus 9:13 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

Exodus 9:1 (Parallel theme): Then the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

Exodus 10:3 (Parallel theme): And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me.

2 Chronicles 20:7 (References Abraham): Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?
